

REMARKS

Claims 1-42 are pending in this application, of which Claims 1-38 have previously been allowed. Claims 39-42 have been added to provide Applicants with a more complete scope of protection. Claims 1, 2, 11, and 18-38 have been amended to define still more clearly what Applicants regard as their invention. Applicants note that Claims 19-22 have been amended as to matters of form only and those amendments do not narrow the scope of any of those claims. Claims 1, 2, 11, 18-39, and 41 are in independent form.

The changes to independent Claims 1, 11, and 23-38 include adding a feature relating to the print duty or thinning out rate of the thinning out masks to be used in a main scanning operation in which the nozzles including an end nozzle of the print head are used, is less than or greater than the print duty for the same main scan print area or thinning out rate for another thinning out mask to be used in a main scanning operation in which the nozzles excluding the end nozzle are used. Applicants submit that independent Claims 1, 11, and 18-38 are still allowable because each of these independent claims includes the feature of an image forming means or method that uses different respective nozzles of a print head in a plurality of scanning operations, which is one of the features cited in the Reasons for Allowance section of the Notice of Allowance dated April 23, 2002, for allowing the claims.

Applicants submit that new apparatus Claim 39, and corresponding method Claim 41, are allowable at least because they each include the feature of a print duty of the thinning-out mask pattern to be used when the nozzles including an end nozzle of the print head perform a main scan onto the same record area is less than a print duty of the thinning-out mask pattern to be used when the nozzles excluding the end nozzle perform another scan onto the same record area, which is similar to the feature discussed above in Claims 1, 11, and 23-38.

Claim 40 and Claim 42 depend from Claim 39 and Claim 41, respectively, and, therefore, are submitted to be patentable for at least the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, individual consideration of the patentability of each claim on its own merits is respectfully requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our New York Office by telephone at (212) 218-2100. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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